

CPS customers gain more options for solar power

Energy company launching two pilot programs

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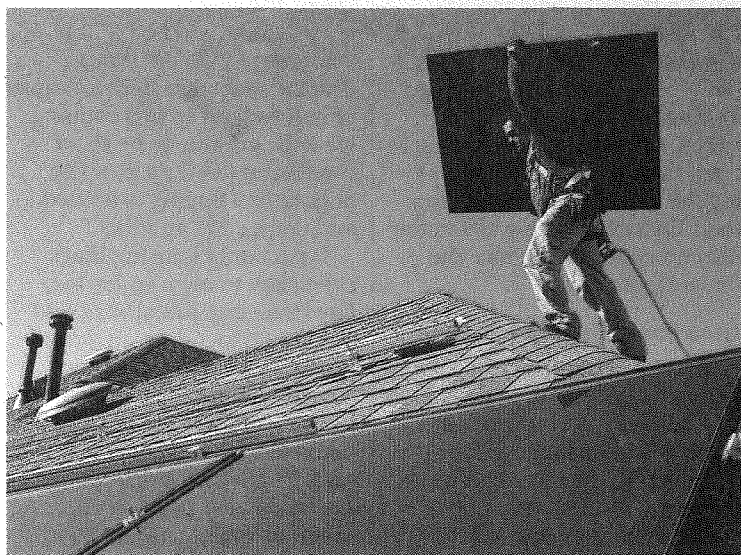
Call it solar power for the rest of us.

CPS Energy soon will launch two pilot programs that it believes will make solar power more affordable and accessible to its customers.

For at least two years, the utility has discussed ways for customers who couldn't afford a costly rooftop system to be able to access solar-generated power. Now the city-owned utility believes it has two solutions.

In one pilot program, customers can contract with CPS to have a developer install solar on their rooftops at little to no cost to them. Customers will get a monthly credit on their bills for allowing their rooftop to be used for the installed solar system.

For CPS, the rooftop solar installations "will be treated the same as if we built them all in one spot — allowing the developer to pass along cost savings by buying solar equip-



Courtesy CPS Energy

A worker with a solar installation company prepares to place a rooftop system. The community solar program will allow apartment dwellers and condominium owners to buy panels.

ment in bulk," said Raiford Smith, CPS Energy's vice president of corporate development and planning.

"We will learn how to administer the program through this pilot and iron out any kinks, allowing us to launch

much bigger capabilities in the future."

CPS also sees the program as a way to improve getting solar power to customers. "If there's an area where there's a lot of demand for it, we'll see it in advance and know how to

build out our capabilities," Smith said. "It will allow us to modify our grid" in a timely way.

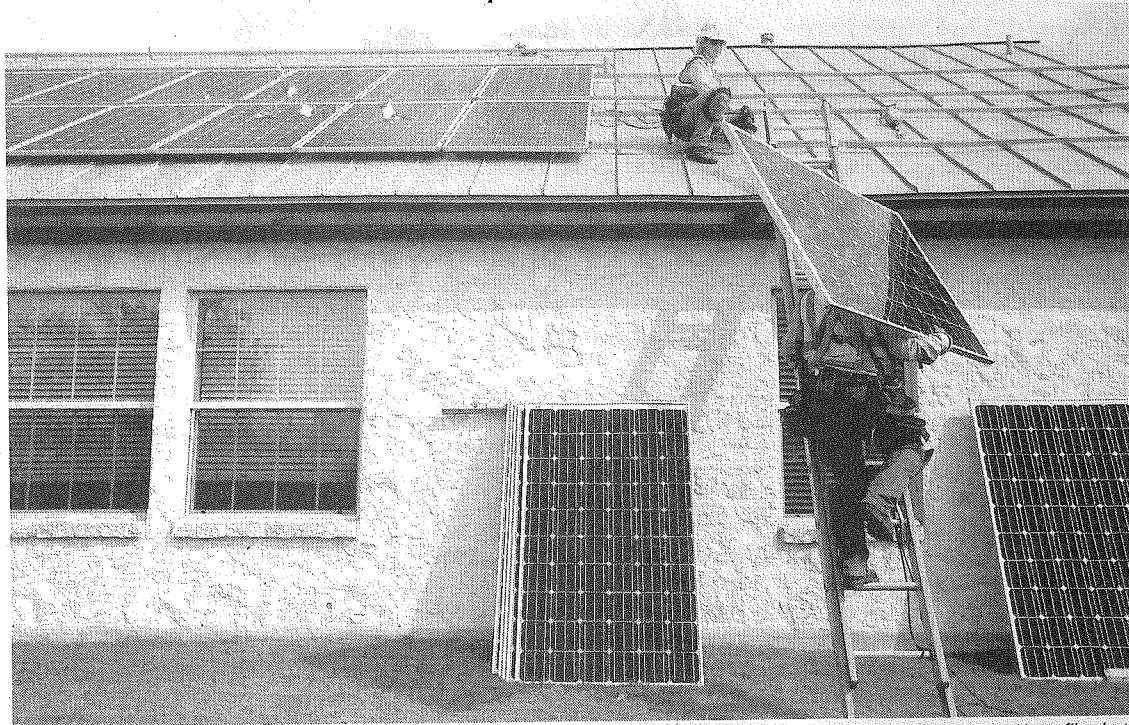
The second offering, a community solar program, will let customers buy panels installed at a 1-megawatt solar farm in San Antonio that will be built by Denver-based Clean Energy Collective.

"Nothing goes on your roof," said Todd Davidson, associate vice president Clean Energy Collective, which won a contract with CPS to launch the community solar program.

The customers will get a monthly credit on their electric bill based on the energy generated by the panel or panels they buy.

Customers who want to try to community solar will be able to start by buying a small number of panels, say, "and then scale it up or down," Davidson said. Clean Energy will work with prospective buyers to explain the cost of panels and what the return on their investment will be.

CPS continues on C4



Express-News file photo

One of CPS Energy's pilot programs will allow customers to contract with CPS to have a developer install solar panels on their rooftops at little or no cost.

CPS Energy launching solar pilot programs

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Another plus for customers is that Clean Energy will handle any maintenance and repair.

Clean Energy will derive earnings from the sale of the panels. It won't share in the ongoing revenue stream from the energy generation, Davidson said.

"Our mission is to make this accessible," Davidson said. "We believe this opens the door to a much bigger audience."

"If you live in a historic home and you can't put panels on your roof, or it's facing the wrong direction, you still have the opportunity to go with the roofless solar program," he pointed out.

The community solar program also will allow apartment dwellers and condominium owners to buy solar panels.

There is one exception: Apartment dwellers won't be able to buy into the collective solar program if they aren't billed separately for electricity.

Both programs were designed to accommodate cus-

"We believe this opens the door to a much bigger audience."

Todd Davidson, Clean Energy Collective

tomers who haven't been able to access solar, whether it be for financial, physical or aesthetic reasons, Smith said.

They "will effectively reduce the customer's bill relative to the size of the investment the customer makes," Smith said. He added that the community solar program is expected to produce a larger credit than the rooftop solar power-purchase arrangement.

Until now, residential solar has mostly been added in affluent neighborhoods because they cost \$10,000 or more.

Even for those who can afford them, such systems can't be added at every residence. Prospective buyers must own their own home, their roof must have good southern exposure and can't be heavily shaded. And the roof must be able

to support solar panels.

"If you didn't have those things, you couldn't participate," Smith said. "So there is a large portion of the population in San Antonio that hasn't been able to access this program."

Anita Ledbetter, executive director of Build San Antonio Green, a nonprofit that works with builders and developers to certify green homes, said her organization stands ready to connect potential customers to CPS' two pilot programs.

"This is very much in the spirit of what we're doing," Ledbetter said. "It's all about options, and that has been a very strong point of our green-build programs."

CPS will let customers know about the pilot programs through a broad-based marketing program, CPS spokesman Paul Flanagan said.

"What we're trying to do here is broaden the appeal by addressing the issues that people have in terms of adoption of solar," Smith said, "and really fix them."

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